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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001805

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [CVIS](#) [EAIR](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: JORDANIANS' RAGE AT US FOR IRAQ WAR DRIVEN
BY ARAB TELEVISION'S WAR COVERAGE

Classified By: Classified by: Acting DCM Doug Silliman.
Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary: A survey of Embassy contacts shows an increasing use of words like outrage, hostility, rage, dismay, disillusion and impotence to describe the war in Iraq. Most Jordanians, across all age groups and social classes, believe the Bush administration failed to provide legitimate justification or international approval for the war, and feel that it is protecting Israeli and U.S. interests: controlling oil supplies, getting rid of Saddam, and redrawing the map of the region. They closely identify with their long suffering Iraqi brothers and sisters who must pay the price for "the US aggression." Some Jordanians take comfort in the anti-war demonstrations occurring throughout the country, but are disillusioned with the government's tight security controls and its perceived capitulation to Washington's demands. End Summary.

Jordanians glued to Arab television's War coverage

2. (C) Anywhere one goes in Jordan these days--a fruit stand, small grocery store or a person's home--one finds everyone glued to Iraq war coverage on Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya or Lebanese television. As soon as any news breaks, people rush to their cell phones to either call or text message friends and family members with their views and commentary. Many express solidarity with Iraqis resisting "the US aggression" and wonder if the US soldiers know why they are fighting in Iraq. A middle class shopowner says he witnessed people cheering when an American soldier is either caught or killed. Older, war weary Jordanians express dismay at seeing both Iraqi and American dead on their tv screens, and feel the Bush Administration should have given diplomacy more time. A woman in her 50s says: Americans do not understand the Arab mindset--"my brother and me against my cousin, and my brother, my cousin and me against the enemy--Arabs must unite against the U.S."

Shock and Awe

3. (C) This military campaign causes very negative "shock and awe" to Jordanians when they view the military and technological power being dropped on what they perceive to be a defenseless population. Although many, especially university educated Jordanians, view Saddam as a tyrant and oppressor of his people, many use the exact words to describe President Bush. Upper class Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin laugh at arguments that the war's aim is to free the Iraqi people of a repressive regime: they view this war as an occupation of Iraq. They question why the US aided Saddam in the past when he has always been known to be a ruthless dictator and butcher by the Iraqi people. Many argue this is only the beginning of a series of U.S. military adventures: Afghanistan first, now Iraq. Many Jordanians are asking "who will be next?"

4. (C) Pol Fsn emphasized that this war has polarized people against the US. Many of what she described as moderate friends in their late 20s who studied in the US and had very favorable views of the US have now moved into the anti-US camp.

Disillusioned with their government

5. (C) A group of Jordanian men in their 30s from a large Jordanian tribe expressed disillusionment with their own government. They don't trust what the government is saying, don't believe its public statements, and see the King as having capitulated to the US government. As evidence they cite the presence of the US military in Jordan, the King's speech asking people to stay calm and calling the war "regrettable", the announcement of the rescheduling of Jordan's debt to the U.S., and the last straw, the expulsion of several Iraqi diplomats. Many Jordanians feel Jordan's cooperation has been "bought" by the US and feel ashamed and impotent to influence their government.

Public Demonstrations

16. (C) Hundreds of students have been demonstrating almost daily at universities throughout Jordan. Jordan University was the site of a large anti-war protest on March 23, where hundreds of students had to be contained by riot police using water cannons and tear gas when they attempted to leave the campus. Several more "licensed" protests have been announced as the government tries to allow a civilized means for people to express their deep frustrations with the war. The government emphasizes that "licensed" public demonstrations will be permitted but "unlicensed" demonstrations or acts of violence will not be tolerated.

Comment

17. (C) This is the first time that Jordanians, and the Arab world for that matter, are seeing the war played live and uncensored on their t.v. screens. Iraqi propaganda--images of dead Iraqi children, appearances by Senior Iraqi leaders who had been declared dead by the Western media, and scenes of "heroic" resistance by irregular Iraqi forces--is not being countered by pro-coalition images. This new phenomenon presents a difficult situation for the GOJ as Jordanians form their opinion and decide to act to a large extent based on what they are witnessing as each day of the war progresses.

GNEHM